

Integrating the Monorail

Commercial Core draft

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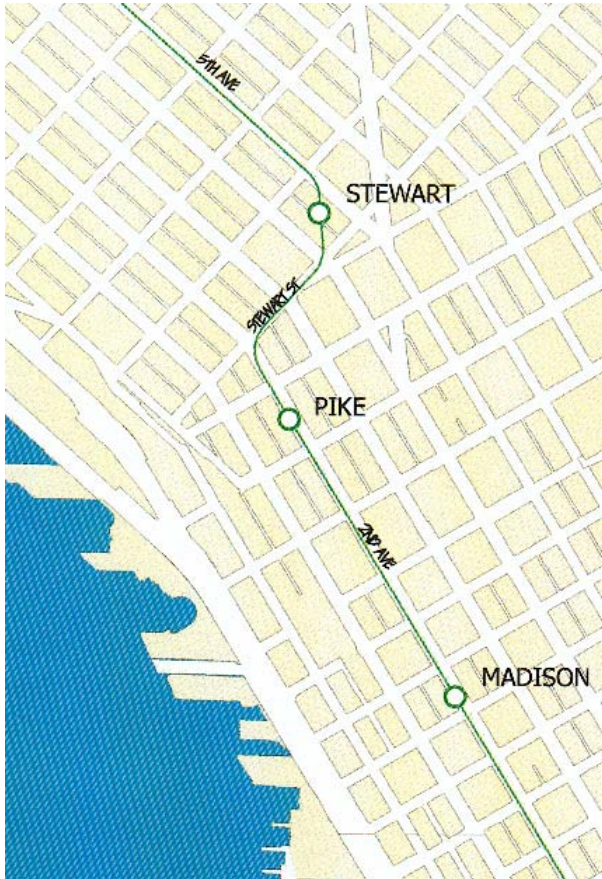
PLANNING
BACKGROUND
REPORT

JULY 2003



City of Seattle

Commercial Core Overview



In November 2002, Seattle voters approved creation of a new public agency, the Seattle Monorail Project, to plan, design and build a 14-mile monorail system commonly known as the Green Line. The City of Seattle has initiated a station area planning program - *Integrating the Monorail* - to make the most of the opportunities presented by the Green Line and encourage the best fit between the monorail and its neighborhood setting.

This planning background report for *Integrating the Monorail: Commercial Core* summarizes existing plans and conditions in the downtown Commercial Core segment of the Green Line corridor. Planning background reports for each of the Green Line corridor segments, as well as an overview of the City's station area planning program, are also available (see <http://www.seattle.gov/monorail>).

The Commercial Core segment runs through Seattle's downtown from the station at Fifth Avenue and Stewart Street, running west on Stewart Street, and turning south on Second Avenue. The Commercial Core includes major destinations and employment centers, connections to the Washington State Ferry and numerous Metro bus routes. The pedestrian environment of the downtown is of the highest importance throughout, and specifically the west side of Second Avenue because of the high density of Metro transit stops.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The downtown core includes many of the region's historic and cultural resources. The downtown is comprised of an irreplaceable, rich urban fabric consisting of buildings from every era of the city's history. Cultural attractions draw visitors from around the world, including the Pike Place Market, the waterfront, and the retail core. The downtown is home to major cultural institutions such as the Seattle Art Museum and Benaroya Hall.

Notable buildings along the route include (those with historic designation are starred):

Medical Dental Building, 1925

Centennial Building, 1904 Fourth Avenue, 1925

Securities Building, 1904 Third Avenue, 1912

Times Square Building, 414 Olive, 1916*

Bon Marche, 1929*

Josephinum/New Washington Hotel, 1902 Second Avenue*

A.E. Doyle Building, 1915*

Brooklyn Building, 1222 Second Avenue, 1909*

1100 Second Avenue, 1908

Exchange Building, 821 Second Avenue, 1930*

Bank of California Building, 815 Second Avenue, 1916*

Dexter Horton Building, 710 Second Avenue, 1922*

Hoge Building, 705 Second Avenue, 1911*

Broderick Building, 615 Second Avenue

(Sources: *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State*, Sally B. Woodbridge and Roger Montgomery, 1980; *Impressions of Terra-Cotta Seattle*, Allied Arts of Seattle, 1986; Seattle Department of Neighborhoods website, 2003; Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation website, 2003.)

Cultural facilities and public spaces include:

Benaroya Hall and the Garden of Remembrance

Jackson Federal Building, plaza and sculptures

Seattle Art Museum and public space

999 Third Avenue plaza



||||| Neighborhood Plan Summary

Neighborhood Vision and Goals

- Maintain the Commercial Core as a major employment center, tourist and convention attraction, shopping magnet, residential neighborhood, and regional hub of cultural and entertainment activities.
- Promote a unique neighborhood identity for the Commercial Core. Encourage variety in architectural character and scale and strive to maintain the neighborhood's historic, cultural and visual resources.
- Guide development and capital projects throughout the entire Downtown area through development of a unified urban design strategy. Strive to take advantage of opportunities to develop new public open space and encourage development of a system of connected green spaces and open public areas.
- Seek to improve the pedestrian qualities of streets and public spaces.
- Seek opportunities to improve mobility throughout the Commercial Core.

Key Activities and Current Issues

- *Downtown Urban Design and Open Space Strategy* – City Design has developed an urban design framework and open space strategy for downtown and has hired a consultant to develop design concepts for Westlake Avenue North between Westlake Center and Denny Way. The Parks Department is in the process of establishing a Downtown Parks Advisory Committee to help coordinate programming, management and maintenance of Downtown Parks and Open Space.
- *Downtown Wayfinding* – City Design is working with a consultant and the Seattle Department of Transportation to implement a Center City

Wayfinding program. The wayfinding program, as currently envisioned, will provide additional information kiosks at key locations, and related directional signs for neighborhoods and key destinations.

- *Center City Circulation Study* - The Seattle Department of Transportation has recently hired transportation consultants to develop transit circulation and non-motorized alternatives for the Center City, with particular focus on the area bounded by Denny Way, Atlantic Street, Elliott Bay and the I-5 freeway. The project is a macro-scale effort to integrate several independent transportation projects that will affect the Center City, including light rail, bus, monorail, streetcar, ferry terminal, Alaskan Way Viaduct, bicycle and pedestrian projects. The plan will synthesize existing plans for the different systems into an easily-understood overall plan. Particular attention will be paid to:
 - overcoming gaps between existing systems;
 - improving travel to and from key intermodal hubs, including King Street Station/Union Station, the ferry terminals, and Westlake Station;
 - identifying both short-term improvements that can be completed in the next one to two years, and long-term improvements that will be needed when major programmed projects are complete (in the next 10 to 15 years).
- *Downtown Development Incentives* – The Commercial Core Neighborhood and Downtown Urban Center Neighborhood groups strongly support recommendations to add additional height and floor area incentives for new office development. Transit and pedestrian linkages between existing and proposed high-density office centers are essential to supporting new office development.

||||| Transportation

Overview

As a regional destination, Downtown Seattle draws visitors to the commercial, financial, and business districts, City and County administration offices, and tourist destinations, including the waterfront, Pike Place Market and Pioneer Square. Downtown Seattle also hosts the Belltown, Pioneer Square, and International District neighborhoods, with evening, cultural, and late-night activities, as well as growing residential communities.

Vehicular circulation in the downtown network is set up to operate as a coordinated system between Denny Way to the north, Yesler Way to the south, and Fifth Avenue West to Elliott Bay.

Extensive Metro bus transit service, as well as other transit providers, is provided within Downtown Seattle. The Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, Waterfront Streetcar and Seattle Center Monorail System provide additional circulation within the downtown area.

Downtown Seattle features an excellent pedestrian environment, with wide sidewalks and high-quality street furniture and landscaping. Steep topography presents challenges for some east-west travel.



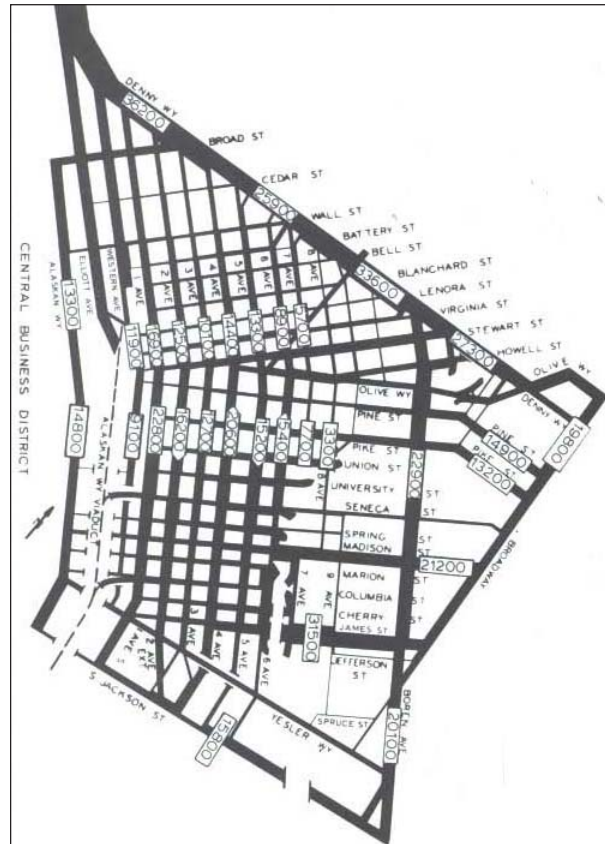
Vehicular Circulation

Circulation in the downtown network is set up to operate as a coordinated system between Denny Way to the north, Yesler Way to the south and Fifth Avenue West to Elliott Bay. The signal system is coordinated to optimize pedestrian, transit and general purpose traffic during both peak and off-peak hours. Consequently, one intersection cannot be adjusted independently of the others, without adversely affecting the entire system.

Fifth Avenue between Denny Way and Stewart Street is a one-way, southbound, minor collector, with parking and concrete sidewalks in good condition on both sides of the street. The street right-of-way varies, but is generally 90' with three general-purpose lanes running below capacity. The existing Monorail is aligned down the center of Fifth Avenue, until reaching Stewart Street, where it begins to move to the west side of the street over the sidewalk with the southern terminus at the Westlake Mall.

Stewart Street is a one-way principle arterial running diagonally in a westerly direction and is coupled with Olive Way, a one-way street running east. Olive Way and Stewart Street meet between Fourth Avenue and Third Avenue, where they create a two-way connection. Stewart Street then continues westbound from Third Avenue as a one-way street.

Second Avenue is a one-way southbound principal arterial, with approximately 90' street right-of way. Second and Fourth Avenues operate as a south and north, respectively, one-way couplet, and are both major transit and pedestrian circulator streets.



Traffic flow in the Commercial Core

The major east/west traffic and transit connections to downtown Seattle are made via James and Cherry Streets, Seneca Street, Union Street, Columbia Street, Olive Street, and Madison Street. Regional connections to downtown Seattle use Seneca and Columbia Streets connecting to SR-99 via the Viaduct, while James, Union, Olive and Cherry Streets provide access to I-5. Madison Street connects downtown Seattle to northeast Seattle, the Arboretum, and the University of Washington via 23rd Avenue East.

Street Classifications

The City's Street Classifications are intended to integrate multiple vehicular, freight and pedestrian needs, minimize modal conflicts, reflect and reinforce adjacent land use, and provide the basis for identifying and prioritizing capital improvements and operating changes. The transit classification identifies a street's suitability for serving as a route for different levels of bus service.

The Pedestrian Classification identifies a street's role in the downtown pedestrian circulation network, distinguishing between streets according to the volume and type of pedestrian activity anticipated. Green Streets are designated rights-of-way where the street will provide open space and enhanced pedestrian circulation.



Street classifications in the Commercial Core

Transit Service

Downtown Seattle is served by most Metro bus routes. North/south service to Seattle neighborhoods is concentrated on Third Avenue, with the other avenues playing a secondary role. East/west service bound for east, central, and southeast Seattle

is generally provided by trackless trolleys on Pike/Pine, Spring/Seneca, Marion/Madison, James, and Jackson Streets. These corridors have service every 15 minutes or better during the day and every 7 - 30 minutes on evenings, nights, and Sundays.



Selected Metro routes through the Commercial Core

Map courtesy of King County Metro Transit, Seattle, WA 9/02

Pedestrian Environment

Downtown Seattle's street grid pattern makes for very walkable urban area and is partitioned into blocks well scaled for pedestrians. Steep topography, however, makes for more challenging east/west travel.

The active uses along downtown streets, the quality of the buildings and streetscape and the large population during the day make the downtown a very attractive pedestrian environment.

Generally, downtown sidewalks network varies in width between 12 feet and 18 feet, are usually concrete and in good condition. Sidewalk conditions along Stewart Street are acceptable to poor, with sections of asphalt overlay and patching.

Within the Commercial Core, several private projects provide mechanical assists, including escalators and elevators, for pedestrians traveling up steep slopes. In some projects, including the recently completed IDX Tower, these features were provided for a floor area bonus.



Bicycle Network

Bicycle commuters through downtown Seattle use a wide variety of arterial streets, although are often hampered by the one-way street system and steep grade changes.

Second Avenue has an important west-side bicycle lane for southbound bicycle commuters through downtown and south to the baseball and football stadiums. As is common with bicycle lanes, this bicycle lane lies between moving lanes of traffic and a parking lane, which can be problematic when people parking cars open doors into the bicycle lane.

Alaskan Way is part of the bicycle circulation network for the region, and an important arterial for its flat

connection between the Elliott Bay Trail to the north and streets connecting to Pioneer Square, the International District, and points beyond to the south. It is a posted bicycle route, but like most Downtown bicycle routes, no space has been reserved exclusively for bicycling exclusively.

The increasing popularity of cycling to, from, and within downtown Seattle is reflected in comparisons of 1992 and 1995 bicycle counts, with an increase of 28 percent. The three count locations likely to best reflect conditions in the study area are Myrtle Edwards Park, Alaskan Way and Royal Brougham Street, and the Seattle Ferry Terminal, which experienced increases of 37%, 64%, and 3%, respectively.



Bike trails through downtown Seattle

Parking

On-street parking in downtown Seattle is generally regulated with parking meters, various load zones, and commercial vehicle load zone (yellow) meters. Several of the east-west arterial streets have AM and PM peak-period restrictions.

The Puget Sound Regional Council collects off-street parking supply, utilization and rates information for the downtown Seattle area, Lower Queen Anne and other Seattle neighborhoods, with the most recent data available from 2002. For off-street parking, most of the non-residential development has parking provided on-site. The Downtown Seattle Association, King County Metro, and SDOT are investigating a downtown Transportation Association that would better manage TDM and parking for downtown employees.

The Downtown Land Use Code has both maximum and minimum parking requirements for non-residential land use; there is no minimum residential parking requirement. Given the high land value, parking is typically built underground or structured, and new development occurs on surface parking lots.

